

Testimony of Maria V. Cruz
IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 221 "AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY LEAVE"
Before the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees
March 8, 2016

Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and other distinguished members of the Labor Committee:

My name is Maria V. Cruz and I am submitting written testimony in support of SB-221. As someone who has lived in Connecticut for half of her life, I have seen and personally been affected by the lack of paid family leave in the state of Connecticut.

I am currently working on my Masters in Public Administration at the University of Connecticut and I hope to mold more policies that benefit women and their families. When I was pregnant with my oldest son I was 18 years old working full-time at Burger King for minimum wage. I also had a 4 year old daughter and found myself struggling to make ends meet. Despite my good customer services and great work ethic I found myself having to leave my job when I neared my delivery. During this time I was forced to collect full state benefits (SNAP, TANF & Medical) because my employer did not provide paid family leave.

Fast-forward almost 10 years later at the age of 27 when I was pregnant with my third and last child and I found myself in the same predicament, despite having an Associates and Bachelors Degree. I had a decent paying job at a law firm; however, because I was considered a part-time employee, making 25-30 hours per week, my employer did not provide paid family leave. This time I attempted to buffer the shock to my family by hoarding money like a squirrel with the hopes of being able to maintain my family without being a burden to society. I failed. Within a few weeks, I was back on full state benefits and had to get back to work sooner then expected. This was devastating to me and left me depressed. There is nothing like having that bonding time with a newborn baby especially as a breastfeeding mom. In spite of the misconception, the majority of us are not irresponsible parents that do not make preparations. We work hard making ends meet and cannot always save money for the future if we are living and struggling day by day.

I urge you to please support this bill because it is needed for all mothers, like me, that do not have an alternative, after all it places less of the burden on the state of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Maria V. Cruz
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University of Connecticut, Master of Public Administration Student
Advocacy & Public Policy Intern, YWCA Hartford Region